

fair access to U.S. telecommunications. I am concerned that the anti-discrimination policy contained in the bill does not go far enough in ensuring fair access to service and in allowing fair access to group claims and protections in the event that consumers feel that they and their neighbors have been discriminated against.

I also continue to remain concerned that this bill does not contain a stronger network neutrality provision—which would prevent Internet providers from discriminating against Internet content—whether through pricing or speed of delivery. The Internet has been a communication medium that has flourished due to the fact that content has moved freely and equally without interference from network providers. Financial incentives to move some content through the Internet faster than other content would undermine the innovation that has spurred competitive Internet content and services. It is my opinion that the network providers should not be the ones in charge of favoring one application over another—consumers should be in charge of that.

A broad coalition of groups opposes this bill for a variety of reasons, including the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Telecommunications Offices and Advisors, and the National Governors' Association. Other groups share in the concern about the need for strong network neutrality provisions, including a broad coalition representing AARP, the American Library Association, colleges and universities across the country, and many others. I share in their concerns and that is why I rise today to oppose passage of this bill.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE, THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, AND HURRICANE RECOVERY, 2006—CONFERENCE

SPEECH OF

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 12, 2006

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, the Bush Administration's policy on Iraq has been based on distortions and misjudgments. Prior to the invasion, I fought to prevent this war. I parted with most members of Congress and cast a vote against the resolution authorizing the use of military force in Iraq. The President misled the American people into believing there was a link between Iraq and the terrorist attacks of September 11.

I understand the frustration and heartbreak that have led many Americans to conclude that it is now time for us to remove ourselves from this misguided quagmire and bring our troops home. That is why I have called on the President to change course. America simply cannot continue indefinitely to pay the high costs in both lives and dollars to stay on the same failed course in Iraq.

In December 2005, I voted for H.R. 1815, the FY 2006 Defense Authorization bill, which the President signed into law in January 2006. Section 1227 of that bill, United States Policy on Iraq, states that it is the sense of Congress that "calendar year 2006 should be a period of

significant transition to full Iraq sovereignty, with Iraqi security forces taking the lead for the security of a free and sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions for the phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq."

It is time for the President to implement this policy. We should not have American troops in the middle of a civil war. President Bush is wrong to say that we should stay the course in Iraq. We need a new direction in Iraq.

The President must present a strategy to Congress to draw down American troops from Iraq and return them home to their families. This strategy must ensure that our National Guard troops are the first to come home, as they were never intended as our primary force for overseas military missions. We need our National Guard troops to be home and available for our local needs.

Military experts have recommended a draw-down of 10,000 troops per month. Although we should not announce a specific timeline for troop withdrawal, it is reasonable to expect that we should have half of our combat troops home by the end of 2006, and all of our combat troops home by the end of 2007. Even with such a drawdown of American troops in Iraq, this supplemental appropriations is necessary in order to insure the proper funding of our military operations during such a draw-down.

Bringing our troops home allows us to achieve certain necessary objectives. First, we will bring our troops home safely to their families and remove them from being in the middle of a civil war. Second, we should send an important message to the Iraqi government to take responsibility for their government—after they ratified a new constitution, held elections, and installed a new government—because American troops cannot and should not remain in Iraq indefinitely. Third, we would remove a powerful propaganda and recruitment tool for Al Qaeda that the United States is an occupation force. Fourth, we would be able to stage our troops outside of Iraq to work with our allies and the international community to fight the war against international terrorism. The repositioning of our troops would help us to regain our focus on the war on terror. Finally, bringing our troops home would help us preserve the strength of our all-volunteer military by improving troop morale and boosting our efforts to improve recruitment of new soldiers.

I have repeatedly called for a change in America's policies so that we can bring our troops home as soon as possible. In December 2004, I visited our troops in Iraq. I thanked them for their service and listened to their stories. It was a moving experience for me. I honor the sacrifices they and their families are making each day.

The men and women of our armed forces are demonstrating tremendous dedication to our nation through their performance in Iraq. These brave soldiers have put their lives in harm's way for our country, and we are forever grateful for their service.

This bill also contains crucial provisions, which I support, that would provide nearly \$20 billion for Hurricane Katrina relief, including funds for housing, community planning and development, flood control, and small business loans. In addition, the House should take up H.R. 4197, a comprehensive Hurricane Katrina recovery bill introduced by the Congressional Black Caucus.

I am encouraged that the bill provides nearly \$500 million to address the ongoing genocide in southern Sudan and Darfur. These funds are critical to meeting the immediate needs of victims of the Darfur crisis, such as shelter, health care, and access to water and sanitation. Sudanese government-backed Arab militias have slaughtered hundreds of thousands of villagers, and they have burned entire villages. Up to two million refugees have fled this genocide to neighboring countries, but the small, poorly-equipped, and underfunded African Union (AU) force cannot offer them adequate protection. This bill provides needed funding to help transition the AU peace-keeping operation to a United Nations mission. It is also encouraging that in April the House passed H.R. 3127, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which I co-sponsored, and which I urge the Senate to take up without delay.

Mr. Speaker, this emergency supplemental is a necessary measure that will provide essential support for our troops in their arduous mission in Iraq, vital funding for the global war on terror, and desperately needed assistance for our own Gulf region and the many Americans who have been uprooted by Hurricane Katrina.

MINE IMPROVEMENT AND NEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT OF 2006 (S. 2803)

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 16, 2006

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, the recent tragedies of the Sago and Aracoma Alma mine disasters have been a difficult lesson in the efforts to improve mine safety regulations effectively and permanently. I rise today in strong support of long overdue coal miner safety legislation. Unfortunately, the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006, S. 2803, while an improvement over current law, neglects to address three simple, much-needed reforms that could save lives.

I cannot support the bill before us today because I support stronger improvements to miner safety—which have been supported by miners, miner families, and industry. This legislation would be made stronger with three additional requirements: Provision of no less than a 2-day supply of breathable air for trapped miners; Assurance that within 15 months, communications and tracking devices will be available to find and communicate with trapped miners; regular inspections of miners' individual oxygen packs, known as self-contained self-rescuers, by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Congress can do better for working men and women by adopting these three provisions. In fact, since this bill passed the Senate, reports have indicated that these reforms could be easily implemented at very little cost. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership would not allow these simple and agreeable provisions to be offered as amendments to the bill.

The Bush administration has failed to make miner safety a priority and instead has proposed budget cuts and deregulation. Despite